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REGIONAL COOPERATION

Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Phase II (1992-1996) of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific

SUMMARY

This addendum highlights major decisions of the Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Transport and Communications and its preparatory meeting of senior government officials, held at Bangkok in June 1992, and also raises important issues which need to be considered by the Economic and Social Council for the successful implementation of the regional action programme for phase II of the Decade, which was endorsed by the Meeting.

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I. SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS AND ITS PREPARATORY MEETING OF SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

1. The Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Transport and Communications was held at Bangkok from 3 to 5 June 1992. There was high-level representation from 32 members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), as well as organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

2. The regional action programme was welcomed as a concrete and effective tool for further promoting cooperation at the regional and subregional levels in transport and communications development. Emphasis was placed on the paramount importance of strengthening the transport network and the elimination of missing links and non-physical barriers, as well as the promotion of greater private sector participation in transport and communications infrastructure development and services.

3. The following themes and issues were endorsed for the regional action programme:

Theme 1: Institutional development;

Theme 2: Transport and communications operations;

Theme 3: Human resources development;

Issue 1: Multimodal transport and logistics;

Issue 2: Commercialization of transport and communications operations;

Issue 3: Environment, health and safety in transport;

Issue 4: Urban transport.

4. The importance of human resources development, deregulation and commercialization, multimodal transport and electronic data interchange (EDI), development of the Asian land transport infrastructure, the promotion of freight forwarding and inland water transport activities was stressed and these areas were given high priority.

5. The close relationship between transport and tourism was recognized, and the inclusion of transport and communications activities relating to tourism in the regional action programme was therefore urged.

6. The continued active participation and integrated cooperation of the members and associate members and the concerned international and intergovernmental organizations were considered essential for the effective implementation of the regional action programme.

7. In this connection, the Meeting reaffirmed its support for the decision taken by the Commission at its forty-eighth session, held at Beijing in April 1992, to retain a separate Committee on Transport and Communications in the revised conference structure of the Commission. It was felt that the biennial session of the Committee would provide a forum in which all who were concerned with the development of transport and communications in the region, including donors, executing agencies and beneficiaries, could consider, on a regular basis, important issues relating to the Decade - that is, the status of the implementation of the regional action programme, cooperative arrangements, mobilization of financial resource and the changing needs of the developing members and associate members. The Meeting further decided that ad hoc intergovernmental meetings on the Decade would be held in 1994 and 1996, when the Committee was not scheduled to meet.

8. The strengthening of inter-agency cooperation through the formulation of the joint project activities of the regional action programme was much welcomed. The need for the continuation of such cooperation throughout phase II of the Decade was stressed in view of the scarcity of available resources. The active lead role of the secretariat and regular meetings of the Inter-agency Steering Committee for the Decade to ensure coordination were considered crucial for effective implementation of the regional action programme.

9. The role of the private sector in the implementation of the regional action programme was recognized, in particular in the areas related to deregulation and commercialization. The involvement of the private sector, as well as non-governmental organizations, therefore, was to be encouraged wherever possible at national, subregional and regional levels.

10. The issue of resource mobilization for the implementation of the regional action programme was just as important as the formulation of a sound programme. The success of the implementation of the regional action programme, and therefore of the Decade, would depend heavily on assistance from donors.

11. Concerned about the current overall funding situation, the Meeting requested closer cooperation from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), bilateral donors and financial institutions for the second phase of the Decade. In particular, noting with appreciation the active participation of UNDP during the first quinquennium of the Decade, its mid-term review and the formulation of the regional action programme, the continued assistance of UNDP for phase II of the Decade, including the regional action programme, was considered essential if the purpose of the Decade was to be achieved.

12. The Meeting welcomed the pledges of the Governments of France, Japan and the Republic of Korea in support of the regional action programme. It also welcomed the statement by the delegation of the Republic of Korea, in which it stressed the need for the countries of the region, particularly those developing countries that were beneficiaries, to make the utmost effort to shoulder the primary responsibility in resolving financial problems.

13. Finally, the Meeting endorsed the regional action programme as reflecting the requirements of Governments at the regional and subregional levels in ensuring balanced development during phase II of the Decade. At the same time, it recognized that the programme should be left somewhat open-ended to take into account any changes that might occur in the next few years.

14. A declaration on the launching of phase II of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific was adopted by the Meeting (see annex).

II. ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

A. UNDP fifth intercountry programme funds

15. At the Meeting of Ministers, the representative of UNDP stated that there was a need for intensive efforts on the part of the ESCAP secretariat and other members of the Inter-agency Steering Committee to secure additional funds from the donor countries and financial institutions, as well as the developing countries themselves, owing to the fact that, as a result of decisions taken by its Governing Council, UNDP no longer had funds available to finance many regional activities of the United Nations system. As a result, the completion of the regional action programme for phase II of the Decade that has been developed in consultation with the members and associate members of ESCAP over the past two years, and endorsed by the Meeting of Ministers, may now be delayed.

B. Interregional cooperation between ESCAP and ESCWA

16. In paragraph 4 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/75 on phase II of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, the Council requested the Executive Secretaries of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia to promote intergovernmental and inter-agency coordination and cooperation at the regional and subregional levels in the formulation and implementation of a regional action programme for the second quinquennium of the Decade.

17. The different approach towards the implementation of the Decade programmes, as well as the heavy commitments and shortage of financial and human resources faced by the two regional commissions, hindered interregional cooperation during the first quinquennium of the Decade.

18. In order to rectify this situation, the ESCAP secretariat has made efforts to involve the ESCWA secretariat closely in the mid-term review of the Decade and the formulation of the regional action programme for phase II of the Decade. The representative of ESCWA participated in the Inter-agency Working Group on Phase II of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, which was held at Geneva in September 1991, to formulate the regional action programme.

19. However, there have been difficulties in further strengthening interregional cooperation, partly owing to the relocation of ESCWA headquarters and the cancellation of the meeting of the heads of the regional commissions which was to have taken place in early 1992.

III. CONCLUSIONS

20. The Economic and Social Council is requested to take note of the results of the Meeting of Ministers, to consider the issues raised in section II of this report and to advise the ESCAP secretariat as to possible funding arrangements to enable the regional action programme for the Decade to be implemented, as well as how cooperation between ESCAP and ESCWA can be furthered.

Annex

DECLARATION OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS: LAUNCHING OF PHASE II (1992-1996) OF THE TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS DECADE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

We, the Governments of the ESCAP region,

Having convened the second session of the Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Transport and Communications at Bangkok from 3 to 5 June 1992,

Recalling resolution 236 (XL) of 27 April 1984 of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/78 of 27 July 1984, leading to the proclamation by the General Assembly, in its resolution 39/227 of 19 December 1984, of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, 1985-1994,

Recalling also Commission resolution 47/10 of 10 April 1991, Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/75 of 26 July 1991 and General Assembly decision 46/453 of 20 December 1991 on phase II (1992-1996) of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, in which it was decided to continue the Decade to its full term with redesigned programmes with an adjusted time-frame for the second quinquennium of the Decade,

Welcoming the retention of the Committee on Transport and Communications in the restructured subsidiary of the Commission, in view of the crucial importance of developing the transport and communications sectors in the region, as well as the role of ESCAP as the lead and coordinating agency for the regional action programme for phase II of the Decade,

Also welcoming the establishment of the Special Body on Least Developed and Land-locked Developing Countries, and the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries,

Noting Commission resolution 48/1 of 23 April 1992, on the declaration on enhancing regional economic cooperation, in which it identified greater cooperation in the development of infrastructure as one of the areas to receive high priority in economic cooperation in Asia and the Pacific,

Appreciating the closer inter-agency cooperation attained through the process of formulating the regional action programme for phase II of the Decade,

Expressing appreciation to the United Nations Development Programme for the provision of financial support for the preparatory activities leading to the formulation of the regional action programme, as well as a subset of the activities of that programme, to form a single transport and communications

programme for Asia and the Pacific to be submitted to the United Nations Development Programme for funding in its fifth intercountry programme cycle,

Stressing the importance of the principle of good governance for the development and management of transport and communications systems in the region,

Stressing also the importance of human resources development in the field of transport and communications,

Highlighting the need for appropriate environment considerations in transport and communications development planning,

1. Endorse the regional action programme for phase II of the Decade, which adequately reflects the prevailing needs of the developing members and associate members of ESCAP, while taking account of the capabilities of the organizations concerned;

2. Recognize that activities within the framework of the regional action programme may need to be adjusted in the light of changing circumstances;

3. Proclaim our determination to participate actively in the implementation of the regional action programme and to cooperate closely with all international and intergovernmental organizations concerned with the development of transport and communications in the region, with the aim of achieving the objectives of the Decade, using, wherever appropriate, the modality of technical cooperation among developing countries;

4. Reiterate the important role of the Executive Secretary of the Commission in assuming the lead role in coordinating and monitoring, through the Inter-agency Steering Committee, and reporting on the Decade;

5. Request the relevant international and intergovernmental organizations to continue their active participation in the implementation of the regional action programme and their support for the activities of the Executive Secretary of the Commission in his lead role in the coordination, monitoring and reporting of the Decade through the Inter-agency Steering Committee;

6. Urge the relevant international and intergovernmental organizations having a mandate to serve as executing agencies to invite the private sector, as well as non-governmental organizations, to participate actively and to involve the national centres of excellence in the implementation of the regional action programme;

7. Invite donor agencies and countries, international organizations, and in particular the United Nations Development Programme, to provide the requisite funds to enable the activities under the regional action programme to be fully implemented;

8. Hereby adopt this declaration, which shall be known as phase II (1992-1996) of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, by the Ministers Responsible for Transport and Communications of the members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.